

Message Text

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ORIGIN DHA-02

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DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 123936

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652:

TAGS: SHOM,

SUBJ: ,REPORTED DEATH OF AN AMERICAN IN SAIGON
REF;BANGKOK (DTG 190555Z JAN 77) (NOTAL)
1. REPTTEL CONTAINED A COMPILATION OF REPORTS FROM VIET-
NAMESE REFUGEES ARRIVING IN THAILAND. INCLUDED IN THESE
REPORTS WAS INFORMATION FROM ONE REFUGEE, MRS. NGUYEN THI
THI FROM QUI NHON, WHO CLAIMED THAT SHE TWICE PERSONALLY
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OBSERVED AND TALKED TO AN AMERICAN PRISONER IN CHI HOA
PRISON, SAIGON, THE LAST OCCASION BEING JULY 1976.

2. CLAIMED CONTACT WITH THE AMERICAN OCCURRED WHILE MRS.
THI WAS VISITING A FRIEND, EX-ARVN LT NGUYEN TNG HIEU,
WHO ALLEGEDLY WAS A CELLMATE OF THE AMERICAN. ALTHOUGH
SHE WAS TOLD THE AMERICAN'S NAME SHE COULD NOT RECALL IT.

MRS. THI DESCRIBED THE AMERICAN AS APPROXIMATELY 5 FEET, 8 INCHES TALL; SLENDER BUILD; FULL HEAD OF LONG BROWN HAIR, FULL BEARD AND MOUSTACHE; HIGH-PITCHED VOICE; MISSING ONE FRONT TOOTH FROM BEATINGS INCURRED IN PRISON; AND PERHAPS 27 YEARS OLD, ALTHOUGH BECAUSE OF HIS EMACIATED CONDITION, HE LOOKED MUCH OLDER. MRS. THI THOUGHT THE AMERICAN HAD WORKED FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CONTROL AND SUPERVISION (ICCS), AS SHE HAD ALSO WORKED FOR THE ICCS FOR AWHILE AND THOUGHT SHE RECOGNIZED HIM. ACCORDING TO MRS. THI, THE AMERICAN WAS SINGLE AND FROM TENNESSEE. THE LAST OCCASION SHE SAW THE AMERICAN HE WAS SLEEPING BECAUSE HE WAS SICK AND WEAK. WHEN LT. HIEU WAS RELEASED ON 26 JULY 1976, HE TOLD MRS THI THAT THE AMERICAN HAD DIED THAT VERY MORNING.

3. MRS THI TOLD HER DEBRIEFER THAT LT HIEU ESCAPED FROM VIETNAM BY BOAT ABOUT SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER, SAILED TO SINGAPORE, AND THEN ON TO AUSTRALIA. LT HIEU'S RELATIVES CONFIRMED TO HER THAT HE WAS IN AUSTRALIA BEFORE SHE, HERSELF, LEFT VIETNAM.

4. WE HAVE HAD OTHER REPORTS THAT THERE WERE AMERICANS DETAINED IN CHI HOA PRISON AFTER THE U.S. EVACUATION IN APRIL 1975, BUT EFFORTS TO CONCLUSIVELY CORRELATE THESE REPORTS TO KNOWN AMERICANS HAVE GENERALLY BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL. ONE IDENTIFIED AMERICAN WHO WAS REPORTEDLY DETAINED THERE FOR AT LEAST SOME PERIOD SUBSEQUENT TO HIS ARREST IN MID-1975 WAS CIVILIAN TUCKER P.E. GOUGELMANN. IN MARCH OF THIS YEAR, VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS IN HANOI TOLD THE VISITING U.S. PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION THAT GOUGELMANN HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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DIED IN JUNE 1976 AND THAT HIS REMAINS WOULD BE RETURNED AT AN UNSPECIFIED TIME. CORRELATION OF MRS. THI'S REPORT TO GOUGELMANN IS UNCERTAIN.

5. (C) THE OPPORTUNITY TO VERIFY A SOURCE'S TESTIMONY ON THIS SUBJECT HAS BECOME RARE. IF LT NGUYEN TRONG HIEU CAN BE LOCATED IN AUSTRALIA, MRS. THI'S STORY COULD POSSIBLY BE VERIFIED OR REFUTED, AND THE ALLEGED AMERICAN'S IDENTITY POSSIBLY DETERMINED. REQUEST THAT SUCH EFFORTS BE UNDERTAKEN. VANCE

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